



**Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director - Children's Services**

Report to:	<b>Lincolnshire Schools' Forum</b>
Date:	<b>24 June 2021</b>
Subject:	<b>Annual Early Years Report</b>

**Summary:**

This purpose of this report:

- To provide an update on the delivery of services to support early years and childcare provision across Lincolnshire.
- Outline the priorities for the Early Years and Childcare Support Service for 2021-22.

**Recommendation(s):**

Schools' Forum is asked to:

1. Consider and note the content of the report.
2. Agree the priorities for the Early Years and Childcare Support Service for 2021-22.

**Background**

Early Years and Childcare Support (EYCC) provides information, support, challenge, and training opportunities to all early years and childcare providers within Lincolnshire. This includes Academies, Schools, Private, Voluntary and Independent providers, Registered Childminders and Out of School Clubs. For the benefit of this report, these will be referred to as "providers".

Early Years and Childcare Support offers providers access to effective support in order to deliver the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework and ensure there is sufficient provision available for families in Lincolnshire. This support enables providers to effectively meet the needs of children and has a particular emphasis on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable families, in order to reduce inequalities in child development and promote the school readiness agenda.

The DSG early years block funding supports 2, 3 and 4 year old provision. The total budget for 3&4 year olds is £35.529m during 2021-22 which includes additional funding for 30 hours. Centrally retained funding for direct early years services is £1.508m during 2021-22, which represents 4.24% of the budget allocation.

The centrally retained budget is utilised to provide a range of support services to the early years and childcare sector, as described within this report.

Early Years and Childcare Support has responsibility for six key areas within Children's Services. These are:

1. Funding and delivery of the Early Years Entitlements for 2, 3 & 4 Year Olds
2. Provision of sufficient and sustainable early years and childcare provision for children aged 0-14 years (18 years for those with SEND)
3. Delivery of quality provision and educational outcomes for children (within the EYFS framework)
4. Professional development and workforce training in the early years and childcare sector
5. Inclusion funding and SEN advice and support
6. Partnership working in relation to school readiness including health and the quality and delivery of Children's Centres

Lincolnshire has a diverse market place, made up of 813 Ofsted registered childcare providers, including registered childminders, private, voluntary and independent group based provision and early years provision delivered by schools and academies.

The childcare provision in Lincolnshire allows working families to access full day care for children aged 0-5 years, with 677 providers offering the Early Years Entitlements (EYE) 15 hours or 30 hours for eligible 2, 3 & 4 year olds, 78 non-funded childminders and 58 standalone out of school care for school aged children up to 14 years (18 years for children with a Special Educational Need or Disability).

Following the EYCC report to Lincolnshire's Schools' Forum in October 2020, the service identified key priorities during 2020-21, in response to the pandemic.

**Progress update on the key priorities for the service in 2020-21:**

1. Launch The Early Childhood Strategy in the autumn term as a mechanism to share our ambitions and drive forward our improvement journey. Although the full impact of the coronavirus pandemic is yet to be fully determined, it is acknowledged that the priorities set out within the strategy will be revisited in due course to ensure priorities reflect the changing needs of Lincolnshire children as a result of the pandemic.

**Progress:**

The Early Childhood Strategy has been published on the LCC website here: <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/4816/childhood-strategy>

This has been shared with locality colleagues and partners to ensure we have a shared vision across Children's Services.

2. Ensure the sustainability of the sector to meet the duties placed on the LA for the sufficiency of childcare provision and EYE places.

**Progress:**

A sufficiency assessment to review the availability of childcare in Lincolnshire was completed in November 2020. Feedback from the childcare sector provided the local authority with an understanding of how the market-place was responding to the global pandemic. The outcome of this consultation demonstrated that Lincolnshire remains in a strong position to meet the needs of children and families.

During the autumn term 2020, the local authority continued to fund childcare providers on the basis of 'as if autumn term 2020 were happening normally'. The local authority invested over £1m in top-up funding through the early years DSG in autumn 2020 and continued to fund all those children that were registered with the provision, regardless of children's actual attendance, in spring 2021. Additional investment from the local authority has maintained providers overall EYE income and supported their sustainability. Business management workshops and bespoke support has been delivered to the childcare sector. A business health toolkit and cash flow templates were developed and published for the sector to support business & financial planning.

Based on consultation feedback, 95% of the market place remains sustainable. The take-up of childcare places continues to increase as we transition out of current restrictions and children return to early education during the summer term 2021. Childcare providers in Lincolnshire are committed to making provision flexible and continue to be responsive to the needs of the community.

3. Support the delivery of good quality delivery and practice across the early years and childcare sector

**Progress:**

Targeted support programmes continue to be delivered through our virtual offer to ensure providers are supported as routine Ofsted inspections recommenced to all providers in May 2021. Ofsted are prioritising those with a less than Good inspection judgement and those who have yet to be inspected. Lincolnshire's early years providers who had a less than good outcome at inspection had an interim visit by Ofsted in autumn 2020 and in both cases received a Met outcome. EYCC has provided one to one support and a range of forums to providers to support them achieve at least a good judgement at next inspection.

Transition support is coordinated centrally with Partnership Meetings between schools and early years settings facilitated by the locality Early years Specialist Teacher and an Early Years Improvement Adviser, these have continued to take place once a term to support transition. In the summer term there were 294 attendees.

There were a high number of expressions of interest (109) received for the universal Transition support from the Early years Alliance (Commissioned Provider for Children centre groups) through virtual let's get ready for school sessions. All early years locality teams will be running consistent Ready Steady Go to School sessions with settings identified by the locality teams and supported by a Family health worker, Ethnic Minority Traveller Education team.

An Introduction to the EYFS Reforms has been delivered in April by EYCC to over 990 childminders, private voluntary and independent settings and school's early years provision across Lincolnshire, sharing the headlines and key aims behind the changes coming into force in September 2021.

To support the needs of the workforce, identified through feedback, the training programme delivery has focussed on the recovery of early years practitioners, a range of courses to support managers to support their teams and for individuals to cope with the effects of the last year. Over 3000 delegates attended training in the first quarter of the year. In autumn 2020 the first round of early years Designated Safeguarding Leads forums was launched in partnership with the Lincolnshire LSCP.

To support the work and priorities of the SEND transformation team, EYCC colleagues have co-developed an early years section of the Inclusion Tool Kit and now take part in Education Health and Care Panel allocations panel.

4. Maintain the delivery of community based activities delivered from children's centres as and when it is safe to do so and in line with government advice and guidance.

**Progress:**

Children's Centres have been open throughout the pandemic to deliver face to face antenatal midwifery appointments and the healthy child programme. A virtual early years delivery programme was implemented during lockdown to replace some face to face sessions. Health and wellbeing walks were introduced in the autumn term to support families with babies born during the pandemic. The virtual delivery is gradually being reduced as face to face delivery is resumed in centres. All sessions remain bookable but this process will be revised to ensure it is streamlined and as customer friendly as possible. Sessions continue to be advertised via Facebook, newsletter, timetables and e-mails. Since sessions have been offered the participation numbers have increased.

5. Prepare for further escalation of the restrictions to be able to react and respond effectively to support the delivery of early year's childcare and children centres services.

**Progress:**

A roadmap was agreed and put in place to return to pre covid delivery as appropriate. Our focus for Centres is to deliver as many sessions as can safely be accommodated to support the maximum number of families whilst adhering to current social distancing guidelines. Staffing Levels and opening Hours remain consistent with Pre-Covid arrangements.

**Conclusion**

As the government restrictions change and we work towards the wider priorities of the Corporate Plan, we have identified the key priorities for the service.

**Key priorities for the Early Years and Childcare Support Service in 2021-22:**

1. Provide sufficient, high quality and inclusive education places locally.
2. We will ensure eligible children aged 2, 3, and 4 years old are able to access their Early Years Entitlement place in high quality inclusive provision.
3. Deliver quality children centres, which are at the heart of our communities supporting families so their children thrive, through working with key partners and communities.
4. Ensure fit for purpose, appropriate services are available for families to narrow the achievement gap, so all children thrive and achieve their potential.
5. Promote and support providers to understand the new Ofsted inspection framework across the early years and childcare sector.
6. Engage providers, schools, academies and partners in a sector led improvement approach to embed effective transition arrangements to better prepare children for school.
7. Design and deliver a good quality early years training and development programme focussing on the statutory requirements and the implementation of the new Early Years Foundation Stage.

Quarterly activity milestones are included within the Corporate Plan to provide a detailed description of the tasks that will be undertaken to fulfil these priorities.

## Consultation

### a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Risk analysis has been completed and recovery plans are available from Children's Services.

## Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Lincolnshire's Early Years Single Funding Formula	<a href="https://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s37563/7.0%20Early%20Years%20National%20Funding%20Formula%20-%202014%20Jan%202021.pdf">https://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s37563/7.0%20Early%20Years%20National%20Funding%20Formula%20-%202014%20Jan%202021.pdf</a>
Early Years & Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-education-and-childcare--2">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-education-and-childcare--2</a>

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